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WAY BACK IN INDIANA

HARRY G. BURNS

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HARRY G. BURNS

WAY BACK IN INDIANA

And Other Poems

BY

HARRY G. BURNS

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FOREWORD

I'd like to leave a word behind,
  Perhaps some verse in ryme,
To live down through the ages
  Until the end of time.

And if there be a thought or two,
  To cheer some aching heart,
It's worth my time and effort
  For just this little part.

THE AUTHOR.

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WAY BACK IN INDIANA AND OTHER POEMS

WAY BACK IN INDIANA

I wandered many years, my boy,
Through cities great and small,
I've seen most everything there is,
And am weary of them all;
I'm old and gray and bent in form,
As I'm leaving old Montana,
But I'm going home to friends that's true,
Way back in Indiana.

I'm tired of strife and struggle, lad,
Of style and all of that,
And I'm sick of silly fashions,
With deceit in gown and hat,
I long for friends that's true, my boy,
Like mother and Sister Anna,
So I'm going home to those I knew,
Way back in Indiana.

But stop a bit, I'd most forgot,
It's been a many a year,
And there are voices once I knew,
I could no longer hear,
I'd find no loving kinfolks now—
Not even Uncle Danna—
And few there'd be of my old friends,
Way back in Indiana.

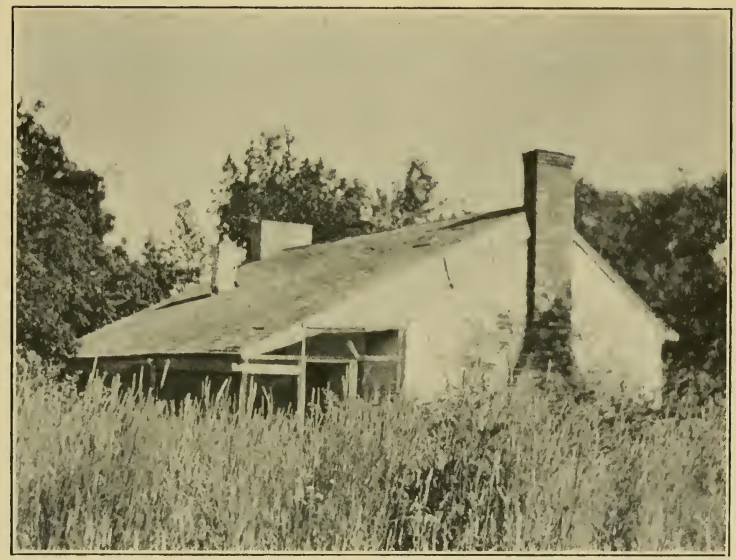
But if by chance the old house stands,
Though tenantless and bare,
I'd like to be within its walls
And think of those that were;
I'd like to stand on the kitchen floor,
Where I played with little Anna,
And weep alone for those I loved,
Way back in Indiana.

THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE

Along the highway of life,
  Are children, fair and young,
Laughing; singing and skipping on
  In the rays of the morning sun.
No worries or cares to burden them down
  No sorrows or deep despair,
Just happy and free as they dance along
  In the glorious morning air.

Along the highway of life,
  In the rays of the noon-day sun,
We see them again in the mid-day of life
  When burdens and cares have begun.
They are filled with hope and ambition,
  For the days that are yet to come,
And they are building great air castles,
  To crumble, one by one.

Along the highway of life,
  In the rays of the setting sun,
They travel on with feeble step,
  Till the end of the day is done,
There's many turns and ups and downs,
  Along this great highway,
And no turning back, just on and on,
  Till they reach the end of the way.



WAY BACK IN INDIANA

THE OLD HOUSE

I've a longing for the old house,
That stood back on the hill.
Just beyond the railroad,
By the creek and the old mill.
I love to think of those days,
When we watched the trains below,
Speeding like lightning past us,
In the years of long ago.

And how we'd sit on the rail fence
As the thing went whizzing by,
And think of the city it was bound for
With buildings and steeples high.
And dream of success to be had there,
With honor and fame unknown,
Till we forgot the treasure we owned then,
The house that we called our home.

But now that success has found us,
Along with its burdens to share,
We find many friends around us,
To give us attention and care,
But with all the city can give us,
That money can buy to please,
There's none like the house in the country,
With its peace and quiet and ease.

A LITTLE RAY OF SUNSHINE

There's a little high-toned lady,
So young and sweet and fair
That makes our home the brighter
Whenever she is there.
She wears a big bow-ribbon
On her golden curly hair,
And she seems to scatter sunshine
About us everywhere.

She comes a running over
From her home across the way,
And it would be just simply awful
If she'd chance to miss a day.
For something about her little self
Just makes me love her more,
And I think the world is better
When she's skipping 'round the floor.

I wish I knew her secret,
So happy and free from care,
With not a single worry,
Nor even a burden to bear.
It would be well worth a million
To travel in her class
So bright and free and happy,
This gentle little lass.

THE BOY

Was there ever any where,
A man so full of business care
That he could find no time or joy
In a laugh or joke with a little boy?
Or could there ever chance to be
A man so blind as not to see
That with no time for the boy
Much is lost of earthly joy.

Call to mind, when you was small,
Some big man so great and tall
Who looked down on your little form
And took your hand so soft and warm,
When you was sure right from the start
That on this friend you'd set your heart,
For he was just what you would be
When once a man as big as he.

Then just remember if you can
And walk as straight as any man,
For little eyes are watching you
As one who's right in all you do,
And if you chance to step astray
They'll take it for the proper way
For anyone with sense would know,
The way was right, or you'd not go.

CHRISTMAS TIME

When grandpa sits a readin' in his big old rockin' chair,
I creep along so quiet like and jump and pull 'is hair,
And 'en he jumps and hollers es if he's scart to death,
And acts like he ain't goin' to ever get 'is breath.

But I 'ist hug and kiss 'im and laugh up in 'is face,
And say: "Grandpa, you can't read now 'cause you 'ist lost the place."
Then purty soon he'll sit up straight and say he guessed he'd know
I'd want to hear 'bout Santa Claus a comin' through the snow.

Then alookin' out the window, where it's awful dark and still,
He says it's mighty lonesome away out on the hill.
And sometimes 'at there's robbers wot steals 'most half the toys,
And that's 'ist why they ain't none for some poor little boys.

And grandpa says it's funny, but it's aways 'most the case,
They never takes the rich boys' toys, but leaves 'em in its place.
And when old Santa turns around and sees wot they has done
He ain't got nothin' left at all fer the poor little orphan one.

But grandpa says it ain't so long 'fore Santa 'll take
'is trip,
And travel 'round at Christmas time in a great big
airship,
And 'at 'll make 'im happy fer he'll bring a big lot
more,
And stop at some boys' houses 'at he'd never been
before.

WHEN OLD SANTA COMES AROUND

Grandpa says it's funny,
  But it's always most the case,
'At when old Santa comes around
  He's never on the place.
An' grandpa he 'ist hates it,
  'Cause he's never seen 'm yet,
And as long as he's been livin'
  They ain't even ever met.

And 'at's wot looks so funny,
  When Santa comes on Christmas eve,
Why he lets me hug and kiss 'em,
  An' I begs 'im not to leave.
But he always says they's other boys
  Wots 'bout the same as me,
'At needs some toys an' other things,
  'At he's 'ist got to see.

An' wot 'ist looks more funny still,
  W'en Santa Claus is gone,
It ain't much more'n a minute
  'Fore grandpa comes along.
And I 'ist think 'at Santa Claus
  Don't come where is big men,
But slips around w'en they is gone
  To see little boys then.

But w'en I tells my grandpa
  'At Santa's 'bout his size,
With 'ist his kind o' whiskers
  An' most his very eyes,
Why he 'ist laughs and hollers,
  An' takes me on his knee,
An' says he's mighty happy
  'Cause I got a Christmas tree.

WHEN GRANDPA READS

When I get big like grandpa wot everybody knows,
I'll sit around the kitchen stove, with specks upon my nose.
And when I'm readin' in a book and grandma starts to scold,
I'll twist around and smoke my pipe, and look just awful bold.
I'll look up just like grandpa does, and play like I'm so mad,
And say, "Grandma, you fuss so much, no wonder I am bad!"
I'll have my way, I'll let her know, no matter what she sees,
I'll poke the fire and make a noise, and do just what I please.
I'll show old grandma who's the boss, and how to run the house.
I'll look so mad she'll walk around as quiet as a mouse.
And when I fuss and scold her more, she'll say she wished she'd die,
And run off in the other room, and close the door and cry.
I wonder wot that I'd do then, left sittin' in a stew?
I spect I'd look around the room and feel just dreadful blue;
I s'pose I'd soon remember, though, how awful bad I'd been,
A scoldin' poor old grandma and committin' such a sin.

I guess I'd slip up softly and open up the door,
And creep along so quiet like, I'd hardly touch the floor;
I'd take her hands down from her face, and wipe the tears away,
And kiss and hug her tight, you'd see, and love her all the day.
Then grandma she'd look in my eyes and search 'em through and through
To see if there's a speck of bad that I was goin' to do;
Then purty soon she'd hug me close, and tell me never mind,
It ain't no matter wot I done, she'll love me all the time.

WHEN GRANDPA READS

SELFISHNESS AND PLEASURE-BENT

Some people, all for self,
  Have little feeling for others;
Always ready to receive
  With nothing for their brothers
They must be petted and humored,
  To keep them in good cheer,
And pleasures must be all their own,
  With nothing to interfere.

You can do, and be kind to them,
  With really no end of trouble.
You can spend your money on them,
  And handle them like a bubble.
But when by some act or word,
  A kindness could be shown,
They lavish it on some other one,
  For pleasures all their own.

  Yet a day is sure to come,
When burdens and cares are known;
That they will be more thoughtful
  Of the kindness some have shown.
And gladly then, they would repay,
  And give each one his due,
That selfishness and pleasure-bent
  Has lost the chance to do.

MY MAMMA

My mamma says some little girls
  Is lonesome as can be,
'Cause they ain't got no mother,
  Like some other girls, and me;
And I jist wonder wot they does,
  When their prayers is said,
With none to hug an' kiss 'em,
  And cover 'em in bed.

I'd like to find a little girl—
  One without no mother—
And bring her home to my house,
  Then run and find another.
I wish I'd bring a hundred,
  And let 'em come and see
How good and kind and lovin'
  My mother is to me.

And if they gets more kisses
  From mother, than does me,
I'll know that she does it
  'Cause they's got no mother, see?
I'll just hug and kiss 'em, too,
  An' run an' romp an' play,
An' they can live at our house
  With mother every day.

And when bed time comes around,
  An' we can hardly see,
I'll tell 'em all that mother
  Jist sleeps next up to me.
O' course, I want them little girls
  As close as close can be,
But I'm always used to mother
  Sleepin' next close up to me.

YOUTH AND OLD AGE

It seems the birds sang sweetest
  In those years so long before
When life was like the springtime
  With sunshine more and more,
And the clear and rippling waters
  With the sparkling of the dew
Was like the life God gave her
  So bright and pure and true.

But youth and sunshine
  Like songbirds come and go
And in place of spring and flowers
  There's wintertime with snow,
So by the cheerful firelight
  We sit with real content
And dream of pleasant springtime
  And happy days we spent.

SPRINGTIME AND WINTER

It was in the early springtime
When the sky was bright and clear,
Just like the light that sparkled
In her eyes of Yesteryear.
And 'twas in the glorious morning
When life was young and sweet
That he met this little maiden
Who could make his life complete.

Yet while the sun was brightest
And the birds were singing gay,
A stranger young and handsome
Just stole her heart away.
And it seemed just for the moment
That the clouds which hung so low
Had shut out all the sunlight
That life could ever know.

But in the evening's twilight
Of life's declining years,
He stole back to the haunts again
That held his hopes and fears.
He found her standing by the gate
The same old gate of yore
But not the same sweet maiden
He knew so long before

How the years had changed her
Though she was fair to see,
With waving hair once so dark
As white as white could be.
There was no smile as before
When he approached her side
For she only saw a stranger
Who had traveled far and wide.

But when he called her name
She seemed to start and stare,
For she knew once again
Her love was standing there.
And from her lips there came,
"Why did you run away?
It was just a joke of brother's
Who'd been gone for many a day."

And though the spring had vanished
And summer time had fled,
And Autumn's leaves were strewn
Along old Winter's tread.
Two hearts were young and happy
Along familiar ways
With thoughts of early springtime
And bright and golden days.

LITTLE KENTUCKY WILD FLOWER

She was like a little wild flower
Sparkling in the dew
Just a tender blossom
The kind for me and you.
She had the funniest talk
And the cutest frock and frills
And she was from old Kentucky
Away back in the hills.

It was "Sure enough," and "You all,"
And all that sort of thing
She could laugh, pout and make a mouth
And then she'd start to sing.
She was pleased when she was noticed
And she'd toss her curly head,
And was happy from the morning
Till it was time to go to bed.

But ere this tender blossom
Had bloomed out full and fair
We saw it fade and disappear
Like bubbles in the air.
And now our hearts are lonely
And often times sad,
For we lost our little wild flower
The only one we had.

MOTHER

She gazed down in the little eyes
With tenderest mother love
And kissed the precious tiny lips
As pure as Heaven above.
And while her mind was centered
On this loving little one,
She dreamed of him in manhood
In years that were to come.

But while the sun was brightest
In the springtime of his life
An Angel took the mother
From this world of care and strife.
But her sweet and precious memory
Forever will remain,
To keep his soul and honor
Without a single stain.

But now in the evening's twilight
By my fireside's gentle glow
I long for her, my mother
I knew so long ago.
Though years have passed between us
Her face I plainly see,
And I wonder how much I've accomplished
That mother had wished of me.

PUTTING ON

Some folks think, just putting on
  Is all they need to do
They never do act natural
  And you can read them through.
For there is nothing in their lives
  But just false pretense
And at times they seem to be
  Without an ounce of sense.

They always act ridiculous
  When putting on their airs
And seem to think the whole world
  And all it holds are theirs.
They even believe that others
  Are far beneath their rank
And come right out and say it
  In words loud and frank.

They forget that sickness
  Could put them down and out
And misfortune take their money
  And put their style to route
And even forget that pride
  Always goes before a fall
And the ones with the biggest feelings
  Drops the hardest of them all.

NOT EVER' KID IS' A POET

My Grandpa he says' to me
  When we was both to home
'At he 'ist know'd a little boy
  Wot read a Riley Poem.
'Bout a little orphan girl
  'At went some place to stay
To wash the cups and saucers up
  And put 'em all away.

And the boy 'ist thought to his self
  It's easy 'nough to do
And he'd 'ist write some pieces
  And be a poet too.
So he 'ist tooked a pencil
  And started in to write
But he couldn't think of nothin'
  Though he tried wil all his might.

And en' his little sister says
  Write about an orphan too
Wat has'ent got no mother
  Or a papa fond and true
So he 'ist wrote six pages
  And sent 'em to a paper
And 'en he felt 'at he was big
  A cuttin' such a caper.

But he 'ist know'd he see it
A printed through an' through
And he'd get so much money
'At he would'nt know what to do.
So he kept a fellin' bigger
And bigger all the time
Till he imagined he was Riley
A writin' things that ryme.

And when the mail man comed around
And looked all through his pack
He found one from the printer
With his name on the back.
But when he tored it open
He almost went to rack
For they wus'ent a speck of money
'Cause they sent his poem back.

And now he's 'ist a common boy
No bigger than he wus
And he don't write no pieces
And don't care if he ever does.
But he 'ist says no wonder
'At Riley wus big and great
Fer not ever Kid is a poet
Wot carries a book an' slate.

IN EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-FIVE

If a young man of twenty
  Or perhaps say twenty-five
Could wake up in the morning
  Back in eighteen seventy-five.
And if he'd given no time or thought
  Upon the things that's past
He'd hardly think that they could change
  In a manner quite so fast.

The first thing to greet his ears
  When he awakes in the olden time
Is the bells on the little street car mules
  With their peculiar jingle chime
And possibly a little lad
  Yelling, papers of the day
Whose names are unfamiliar
  To the ones he's heard them say.

His attention is attracted
  To a boot black on the street
With box flung over the shoulder
  Crying "Shine!" to all he'll meet.
And a little farther on, is a boy
  With a ladder and nimble feet
Turning off the gas lights
  On each corner of the street.

He see's the old bouldered streets
And wonders how you'd get to work
On these little toy mule cars
Jumping the track at every jerk.
And failing to find anything
That seems familiar to him
He looks on still farther
But finds the chances slim.

There is no Soldier's Monument
Nor State House standing there
And not even the terminal station
With the interurban, he'll declare
But he may see the railway station
With its high tower and clock
Above the little old city
Just down another block.

But even this is missing
Though there is an old brick depot
With about five archways
Where trains are passing slow
But now he's just a little tired
And wants some place to go
So he decides to take a rest
In a moving picture show.

But if he stops to ask a man
That man will surely say,
He never heard of a picture moving
Like actors in a regular play.
Nor does he know of a telephone
Unless its across the street,
Where they have one on exhibition
And the like has never been beat.

Well how about an automobile
A buggy running without a horse
And the man just laughs still louder
Until he's almost hoarse.
But after laughing, and laughing,
Until he can laugh no more,
He says I plainly see now
The asylum your looking for.

But this young man who awoke
In Eighteen Seventy-Five
Finds things mighty dull
And not very much alive.
The Civil War had ended
Only ten years before
And the Centennial at Philadelphia
Was talked of more and more.

But this will be enough for him
And as he stands there all alone
I see a shade of discontentment
On his face so plainly shown.
And as the night draws on again
With the dim glow of the street lights too
He sees how gloomy it all is
Compared to the things he knew.

Ah, yes, these old times are interesting
And pleasant in every way
But "I'm ready to go back," he murmurs
And so he would be, it's fair to say.
But to us who remember, it is different
We would not give up the convenience of today
And be willing to go back again
To the real old fashioned way.

Yet the remembrance of dim street lights
Slow mule cars and other ways
Brings no thought or gloom to our minds
But reflect pleasant association of those days.
Association with those we respected
Whose memory still survives,
And lingers with us always
To cheer and brighten our lives.

THE SOLDIER OF LINCOLN'S DAY

I saw a faded picture
Of a scene in sixty-five
The death chamber of Lincoln
Who was scarcely yet alive
It was a scene that's been recorded
In history's final page
The sad and tragic ending
Of a great and noble sage.

There must be scenes in memory
That present themselves to view
To those whose lives were connected
With this great man they knew.
From the statesman to the soldier
Who fought the bloody war
To keep our country united
As it always was before.

But as I stood enchanted
With thoughts upon the past
My eyes were turned abruptly
On a scene that cannot last.
For the soldiers of the Union
Are fading one by one,
And few are left who answered
Lincoln's call to shoulder gun.

No wonder it was hanging there
This picture that caught my eye,
For close before my vision
A casket was carried by
Draped in the grand old colors
Of the stars and strips of old
In honor of the soldier dead
Who fought so brave and bold.

It was the turning of the pages
Of History which begun
Way back in Civil War days
In eighteen sixty-one
But it will soon be ended
For the veteran of that awful affray
Will only be in memory
The Soldier of Lincoln's Day.

In the strange Land,
  Far and Near
A familiar voice,
  Is good to hear
And often times,
  Where ere' we go
We chance upon,
  Some friend we know.

But North or South,
  East or West
The one we always,
  Greet the best
Is the fellow who
  Just happens down
From way back up
  In our own home town.

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